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U.S. investigators in France to review doping evidence against Lance Armstrong

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The Associated Press reported Wednesday that Food and Drug Administration Investigator Jeff Novitzky spent the day meeting with French police officials in Lyon, apparently reviewing files containing evidence of alleged doping violations by Lance Armstrong and other members of his past teams.

According to an unnamed source cited by the AP, Novitzky and other American investigators have been in France this week to conduct meetings with representatives of the French National Anti-Doping Agency (AFLD) and with police to assess evidence of doping, including six of Armstrong's urine samples from the 1999 Tour de France and the discovery of medical equipment in a trash container during the 2009 Tour.

According to the AP report, Novitzky was accompanied by Assistant U.S. attorney Doug Miller and U.S. Anti-Doping Agency CEO Travis Tygart. *VeloNews'* email and telephone messages to Novitzky have been unanswered.

Novitzky's presence in France was confirmed when he was recognized and approached by AP reporters while leaving his hotel in Lyon on Tuesday. The federal investigator declined to comment on the nature of his visit to France.

Miller and Novitzky were both involved in the BALCO grand jury investigation of doping in baseball and other sports.

The two are now heading up a grand jury investigation into doping in cycling, one that began more than a year ago when former professional cyclist Joe Papp was charged with distribution of performance-enhancing drugs, including recombinant erythropoietin (EPO) and Human Growth Hormone. Papp is awaiting sentencing after pleading guilty in February to conspiracy charges in Federal Court in Pittsburgh. At the time, the federal investigation focused on Papp's list of 187 customers, apparently including former Rock Racing rider Kayle Leogrande.

The scope of the investigation, however, widened in April of this year when former U.S. Postal rider Floyd Landis admitted to having doped throughout his career and then leveled allegations against several of his former teammates, including Armstrong.

When news of the broadened investigation surfaced, former AFLD director Pierre Bordry extended an invitation to American authorities to review doping evidence the agency had accumulated against Armstrong since his return to the sport in 1999. Following treatment for testicular cancer, Armstrong burst back on the cycling scene that year, winning the first of seven successive Tours de France. The American has been dogged by allegations of doping ever since that first win, claims he has consistently denied.

In 2005, the AFLD conducted experiments on urine samples from the 1999 Tour and found evidence of EPO use in 16 of those, six of which belonged to Armstrong. The test had not yet been developed in 1999 and the sport's only method of monitoring the drug's use was to conduct tests of riders' hematocrit levels. The UCI conducted an investigation and declared that the tests did not prove that the riders had doped and charged the AFLD with leaking information about the results to the French sports daily *L'Equipe*.

The AFLD, however, has kept the samples and test results and Bordry has apparently made those available to U.S. authorities. Novitzky and others in the U.S. delegation apparently met with AFLD officials on Tuesday.

On Wednesday, the Americans met with French police at the headquarters of the international law enforcement agency Interpol, in Lyon. That meeting, according to sources cited by the AP, focused largely on a police investigation of medical equipment retrieved from a trash container during the 2009 Tour.

Police charged that the equipment had belonged to the Astana team, which included both Armstrong and eventual Tour winner Alberto Contador. Investigators conducted several tests on syringes and transfusion



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equipment found in the search, including DNA profiles. No charges resulted from that investigation, but those files were apparently made available to American investigators this week.

Armstrong spokesman, attorney **Mark Fabiani**, has dismissed news of the current investigation as a review of old allegations which have never resulted in charges. Fabiani noted that if the 1999 samples are still at issue, the investigation is covering issues that have long been settled.

"The samples were clean when originally provided and tested," Fabiani wrote in an email to *VeloNews*. "So we have nothing to be concerned about. Period."

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